

NATURALIST at LARGE

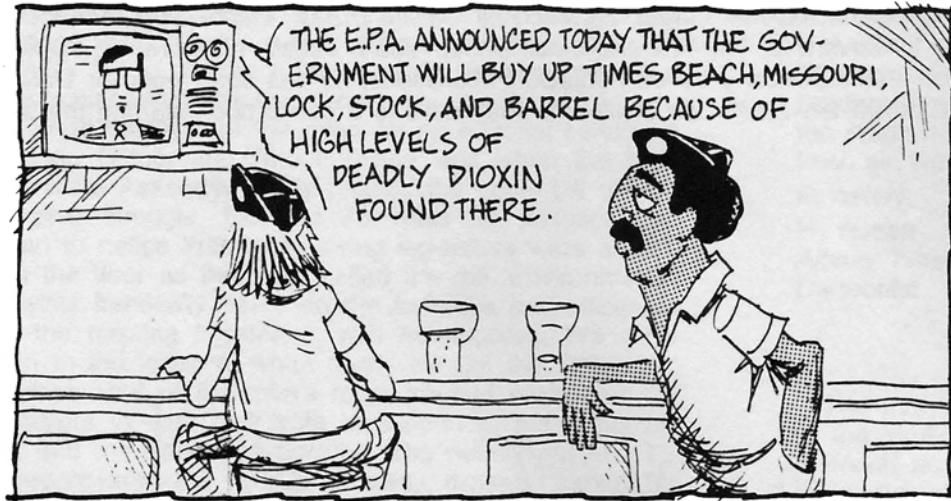


environmental
cartoons
by
Don
Rittner
and
Raoul
Vezina

©1982
RITTNER
VEZINA

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Published by THE NATURALIST SYNDICATE

Don Rittner is nationally known for his ten year preservation effort on behalf of the famous Albany Pine Bush. His book, *Pine Bush – Albany's Last Frontier*, earned him the Oak Leaf Award from the Nature Conservancy in 1977. He has written many science articles for local and national publications and is the founder and president of the American Pine Barrens Society. He is presently the Natural Resource Manager for the Town of Guilderland; is working on more publications, including another Pine Bush book and a play; and is coordinating the formation of an environmental think tank for New York State.

Raoul Vezina has been a cartoonist and commercial artist since the late sixties, contributing to the Mid-Hudson underground "Gargoyle", *New Paltz Comix* and national magazines such as *Official U.F.O.*, *Gasm*, and *Pub*. He has also designed and illustrated logos and LP covers for The Trix and Black Sheep labels. Locally his work has appeared in the *Albany Lark*, *Kite*, and *Metroland*. For the Albany based FantaCo Publications, he has done work for *Gates of Eden*, and the series he may be best known for, *Smilin' Ed Smiley*. In the works is a comic book starring the band, Blotto.



"Albany's Pine Bush decisions."

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COMMENTS

During the last several years that I have lobbied on environmental issues in the New York State Legislature, I have often felt the need for a good editorial cartoon to convey to the general public what is actually going on in the legislature. An editorial cartoon — like a picture — is often worth a thousand words. Newspaper articles and television spots provide a description of the final result, but normally fail to convey a sense of the political force and compromises that actually go on.

A good example of the need for an editorial cartoonist like Don Rittner and Raoul Vezina was when the New York State Assembly finally passed the bottle bill after a ten year struggle. Needing 76 votes for passage, we began to notice that many swing legislators were absent from the floor as the clerk called the roll. Environmental lobbyists frantically searched the hallways and offices to find the missing legislators, with no success. We were down to the letter W when finally we got the 76th vote. Suddenly, out of the men's room trooped more than 20 legislators to cast their vote in support of the bottle bill now that the issue was decided. The newspaper and TV stories covered the vote as an easy, runaway victory for the bottle bill. An editorial cartoon by Don and Raoul would have caught the 20 legislators trooping out of the men's room to join in the victory.

Perhaps the main function of editorial cartoons is to highlight life's ironies, and to penetrate the so-called objective reporting of the media that often provides a false picture of reality. No matter how outlandish his statements are, Secretary of the Interior James Watt's positions are treated with respect by the media. The government's position is always presented first and at great length, with a few words from environmentalists added on at the end. The reader is then left to try to discern which side is telling the truth. An environmental cartoon on the other end would have James Watt standing in front of a row of tree stumps, carrying an axe, with a caption at the bottom stating: "James Watt dedicating a new national forest." Which description — the faithful printing of government press releases, or Don and Raoul's cartoons — paints a truer picture of reality?

Editorial cartoons are also invaluable in challenging authority. Too often the general public is all too willing to allow public figures to be the ones to decide what is best for the environment. By poking fun at such public figures, and exposing both their human weaknesses and their financial conflicts of interest, these cartoons make people realize that they can not delegate the responsibility for environmental protection.

Finally, these cartoons have provided the inspiration for many Albany environmentalists to continue their struggles in the public interest. At the end of a long week of smoke filled conference rooms, unresponsive legislators, and legions of corporate lobbyists dressed in their expensive three-piece suits, it's not unusual for one to throw up his or her hands in frustration. But seeing these cartoons in the afternoon newspaper not only injects one with a much needed dose of humor, but reminds us why we are fighting so hard.

Judith Enck
Executive Director
Environmental Planning Lobby
Albany, N.Y.

Wish you luck in your publication of collections of cartoons in NATURALIST AT LARGE. A strong voice in the field of environmental protection is well taken. The satirical comment on this vital issue is an excellent way to make some of the points you touch upon.

Hopefully we can all benefit from a wise national policy that will bring about common sense in a world that is too little conscious of the preservation of our environment. Borders of states and countries do not point to the end of the responsibility of those concerned with preserving our fresh air, water, and wildlife worldwide.

Sincerely,
Hy Rosen
Albany Times Union
Cartoonist

■ ■ ■

The truth hurts. Often it can hit like a sledge hammer to the skull and result in severe headaches, a churning stomach and sleepless nights. But the fact remains that the truth must be told, no matter how painful it happens to be. In this book the eloquent Mr. Rittner and talented Mr. Vezina offer some 30 of their best sledge hammers. Fortunately, the anesthetic that is humor allows us a smile on our faces while at the same time raises a welt on our consciousness. It hurts so good.

John Caldwell
Cartoonist

■ ■ ■

The cartoons of Rittner and Vezina vividly demonstrate man's continuous assault on our environment. Over 20,000 Sierra Club members have enjoyed their work. If a picture is worth a thousand words, these cartoons are priceless.

These cartoons really hit home. Their message is a call to action for those of you on the sidelines. For those of us in the trenches, their work in reinforcing.

Chris Ballantyne
State Activities Coordinator
Sierra Club – Atlantic Chapter

■ ■ ■



INTRODUCTION

Dedicated to Thomas Nast (1840-1902)

Something doesn't make sense to me. When I read the papers every morning, it never fails that there is at least one story about some community being evacuated from a toxic spill or chemical cloud; the government buying up an area because it's totally contaminated with toxics; some neighborhood can't drink its water because it's polluted; people's homes are being torn down because they've been sprayed with deadly chemicals; or some families are being poisoned by exposure to a toxic dump or radiation. The frustration of all this is that the present federal administration seems to be doing its best to destroy the very laws that were designed to prevent these disasters, and it's going at it with a vengeance. What do you think will be done about it?

Raoul and I have chosen the editorial cartoon as a means to make people aware of environmental issues. We try to do it in a humorous manner, although the laughter has a cynical tone.

We have chosen thirty cartoons for this book that represent an environmental ethic. You will agree or disagree with our philosophy, but either way we hope to get you thinking about the environmental issues that confront our society today.

As I write this, the radio blares on with reports of James Watt pulling the Beach Boys off the bill at the Washington Monument on July fourth, in favor of a Vegas song-and-dance man with a couple of casinos in his hip pocket and the mob at his heels — all in an effort to discourage the "wrong element." Watt has since apologized. Next week it'll be something else. I swear to God, the man couldn't make himself an easier target for a cartoonist if he painted red concentric circles on his shining scalp.

Sometimes I wonder if Don and I are just taking cheap shots at Watt, the EPA, the doings at the Pine Bush, and others. But, I reason, what the hell, it's our job to take cheap shots, expensive shots, long shots, whatever it takes to make a point and hopefully raise a laugh. We're not above that.

If we are really lucky, these cartoons will motivate you to take an active role in seeking solutions to your local environmental problems.

NATURALIST AT LARGE appears weekly in the Albany *Knickerbocker News*, where it first appeared on 4 August 1982. I thank William M. Dowd, Managing Editor, and Howard Healy, Editorial Page Editor, for giving us the opportunity to present our cartoons.

We are dedicating this book to Thomas Nast, a German-born American cartoonist. Nast's cartoons, which appeared in *Harpers Weekly*, are credited with helping destroy the powerful and corrupt New York City political machine known as the Tweed Ring (1869-1872). Boss Tweed himself admitted that even though his constituents couldn't read, "...they can't help seeing them damned pictures."

We hope we're as effective.

Don Rittner

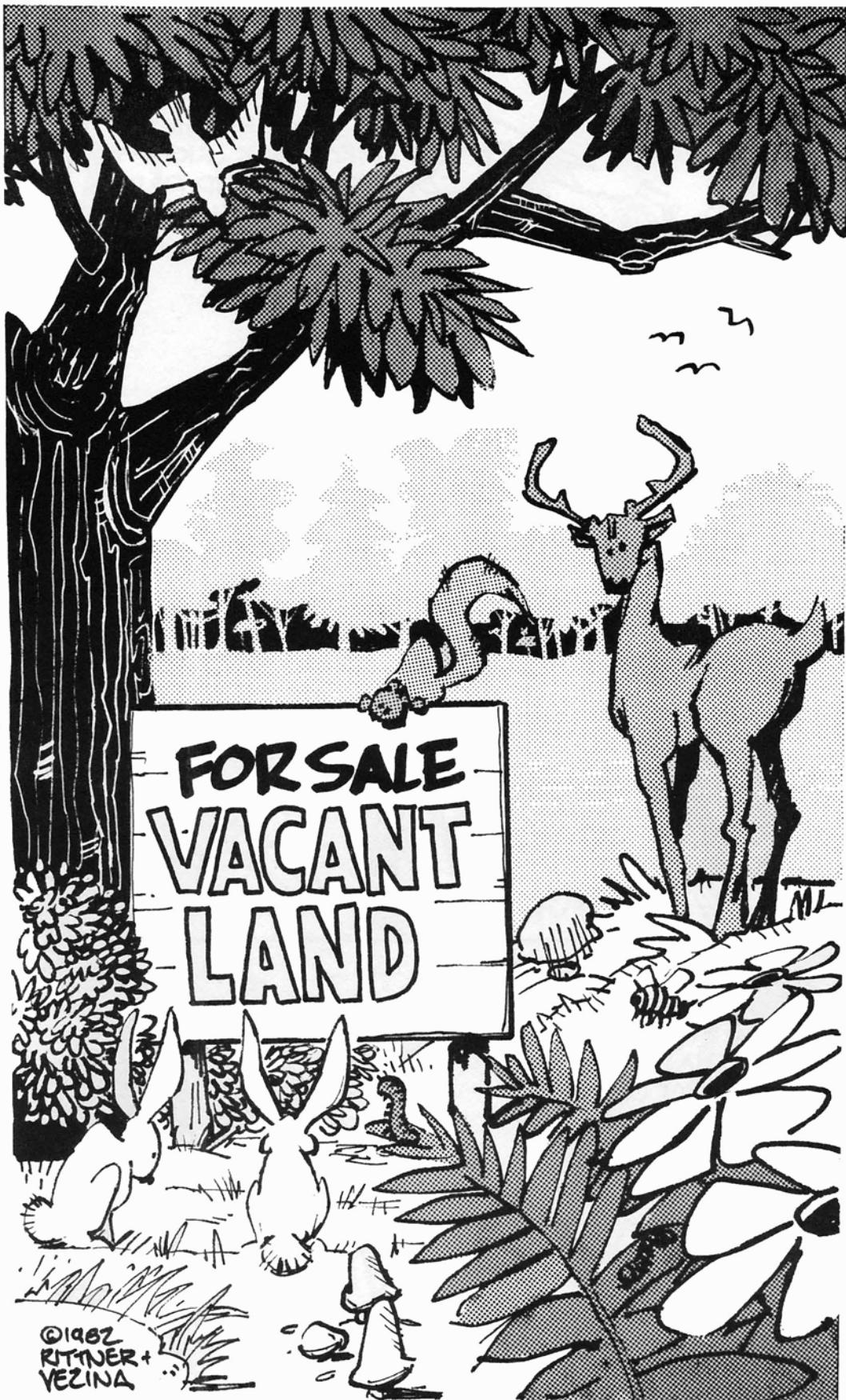
But what is there to laugh about? Governments and corporations are committing slow suicide to supply the demands of next week. Wilderness acreage is going to the highest bidder while we're running fast out of rug to sweep the garbage under. The Secretary of the Interior is more concerned about rock'n'roll than with endangered species. And the folks who are pushing for some sanity in dealing with this mess are branded "kooks." Under the circumstances, you've got to either laugh or cry. I'll opt for laughter, but with the eyes open. That's the trick.

Here's hoping that you enjoy our doodles and puns, whether or not you share our collective point of view.

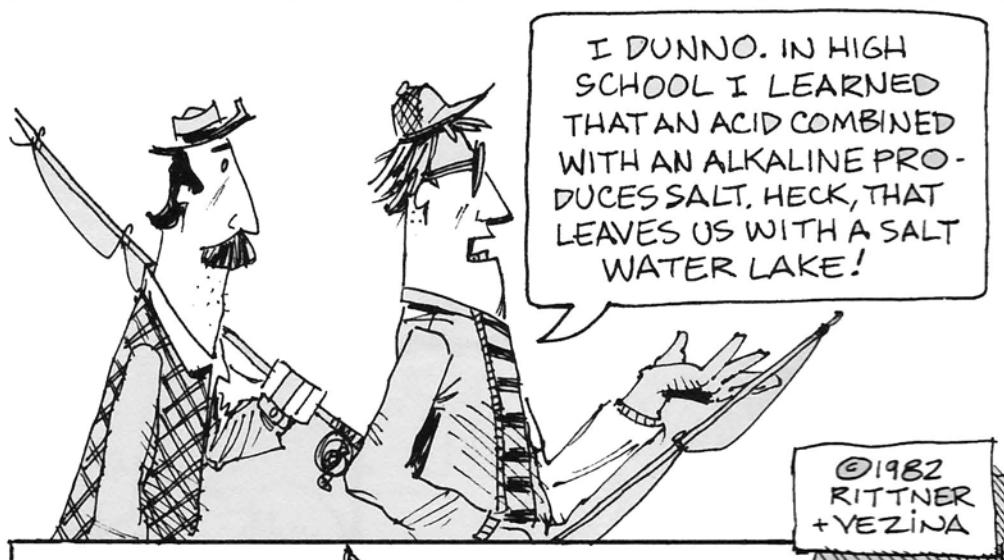
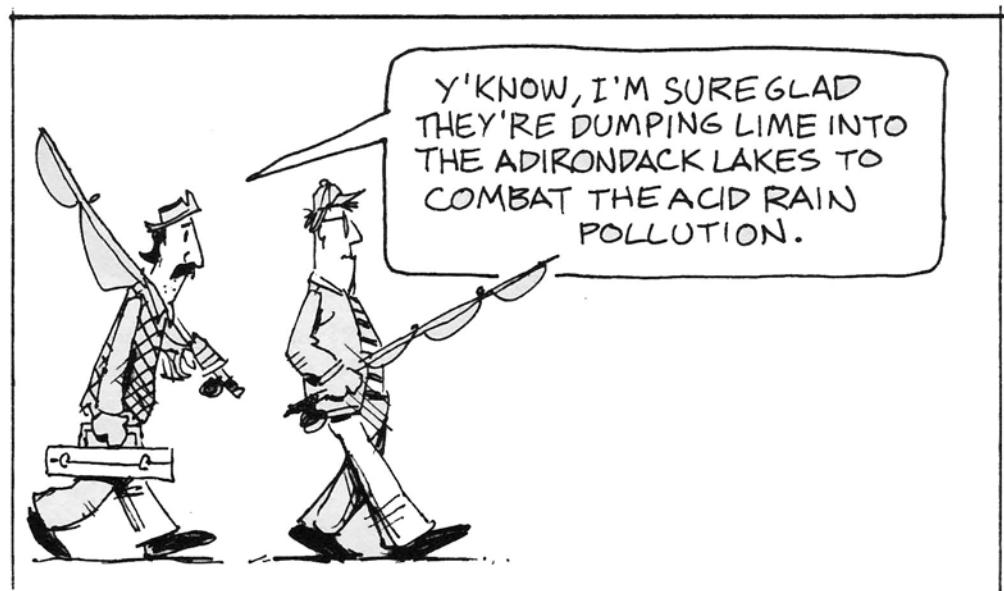
Also here's to another year of cartoons of bald men in glasses.

P.S. Incidentally, "I Love Canal" is also the title of a song written and performed by local musician Guy Spatafora. I'm hoping for a vinyl version. It's well worth a listen.

Raoul Vezina



"Do you think we can come up with a down payment?"



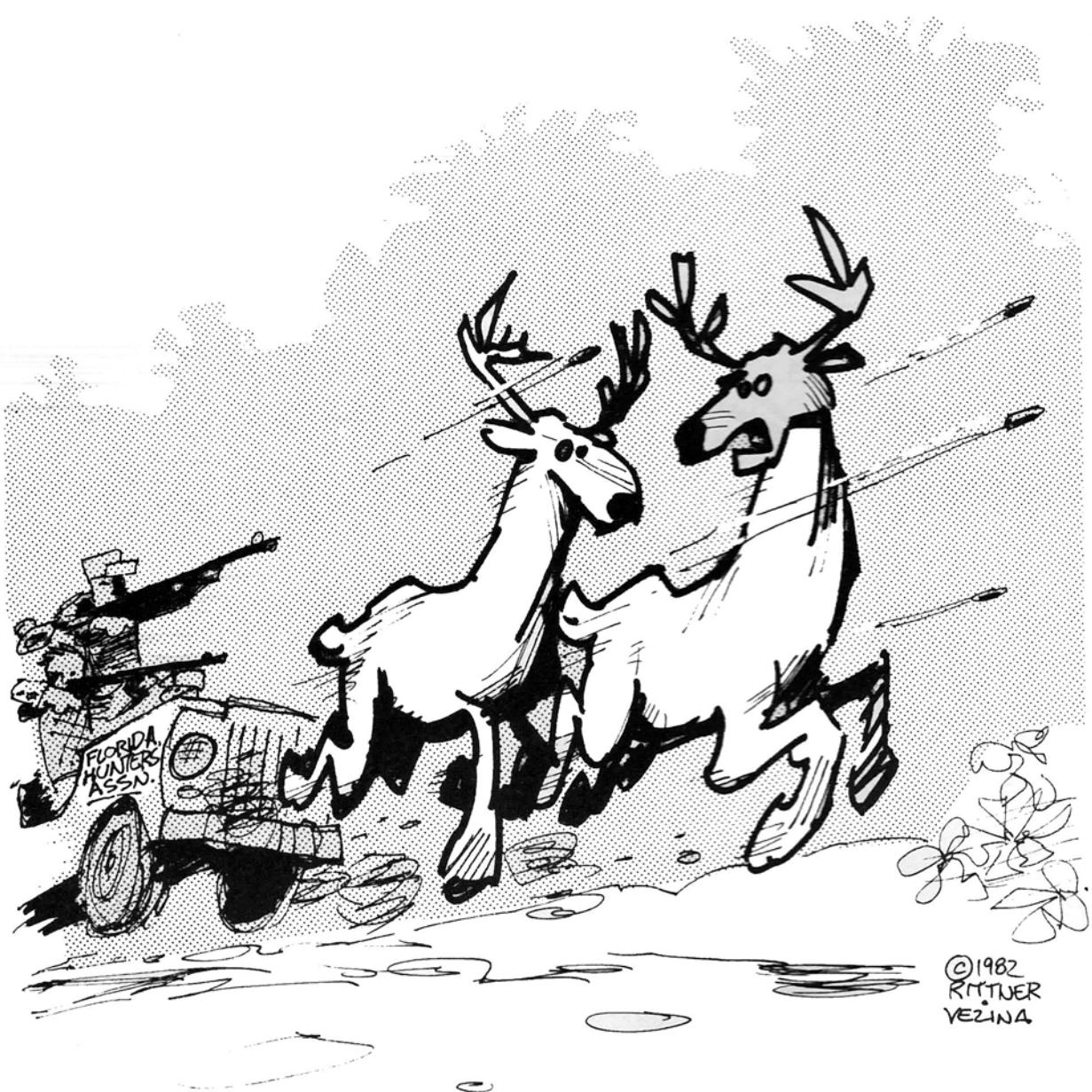
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+ VEZINA



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"It makes a good trophy, but the meat was hard to swallow."



"I think I liked the wolves better!"

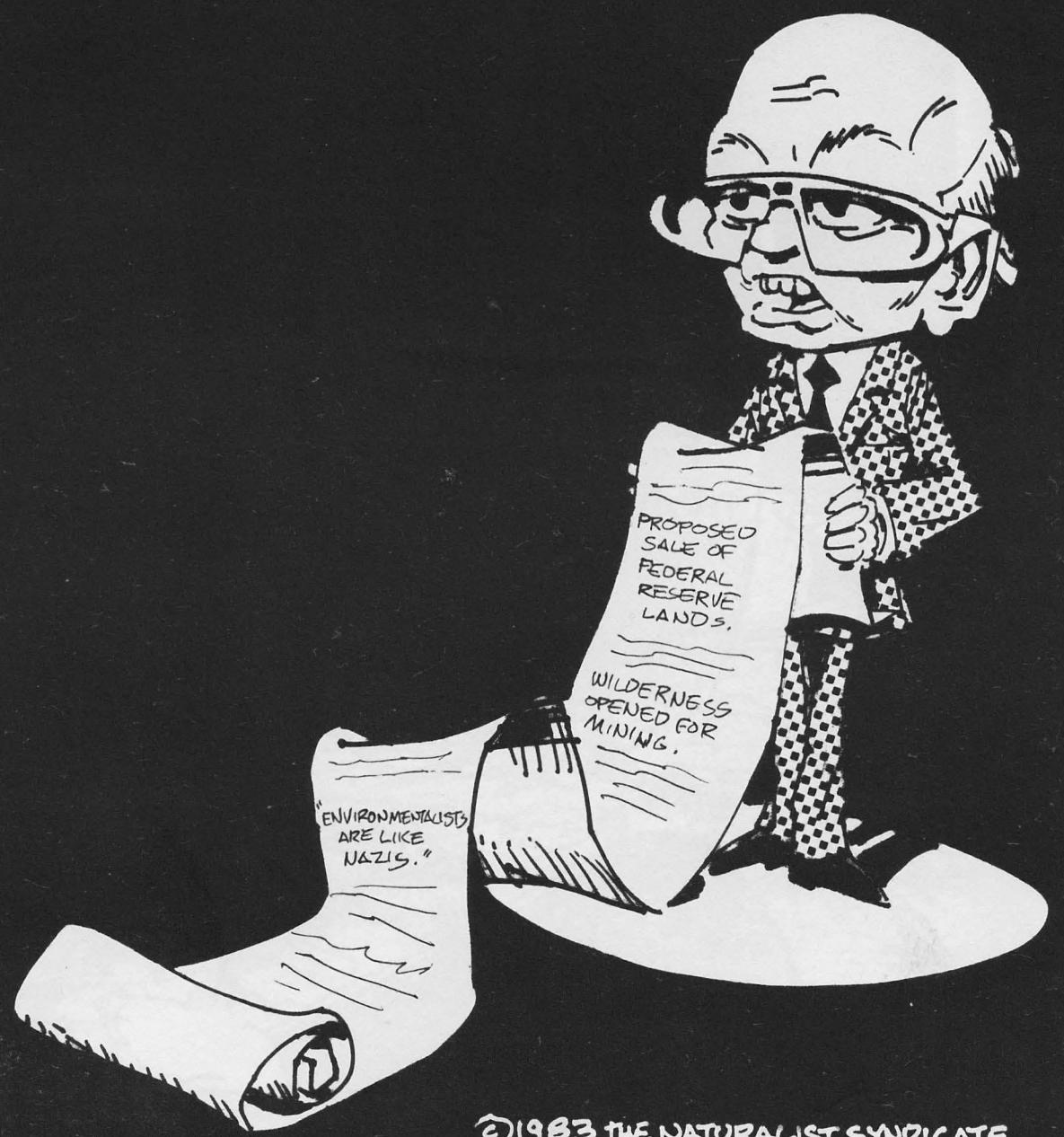


"Meanwhile on the national front. Passage of the Clean Air Bill doesn't look good."



"Do you think it's time to act on that acid rain thing?"

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"And while I'm apologizing for my comments on Indians..."

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R.I.P.
EPA

1970 1983

Born With Great Intent,
But Somehow Got Taken.
Reduced Enforcement,
Laws Got Bent
Thanks to Ronnie Reagan."

TOXIC
MATERIAL

DANGER

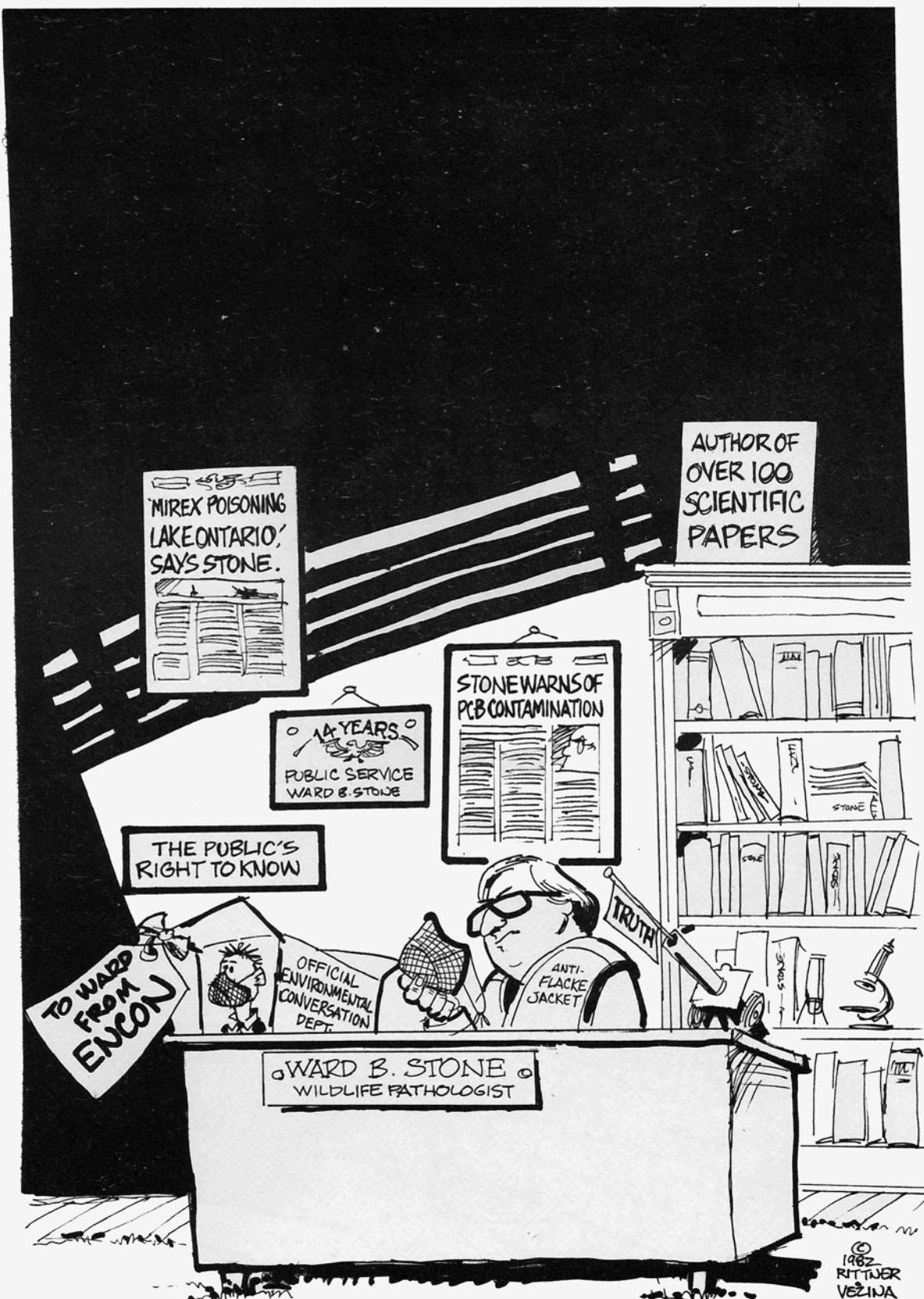
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"I tell you gentlemen, this new ad campaign will give us a much more positive corporate image."



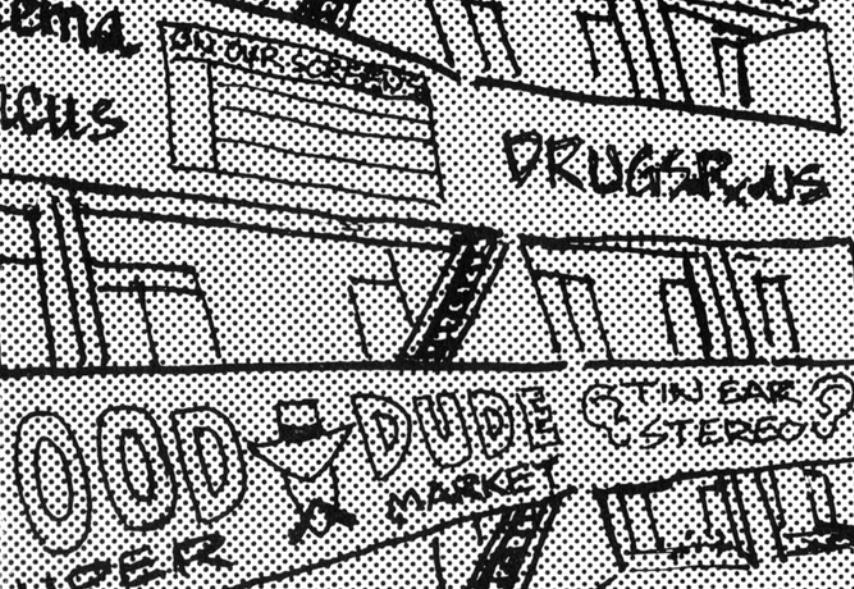
"A matter of priorities."



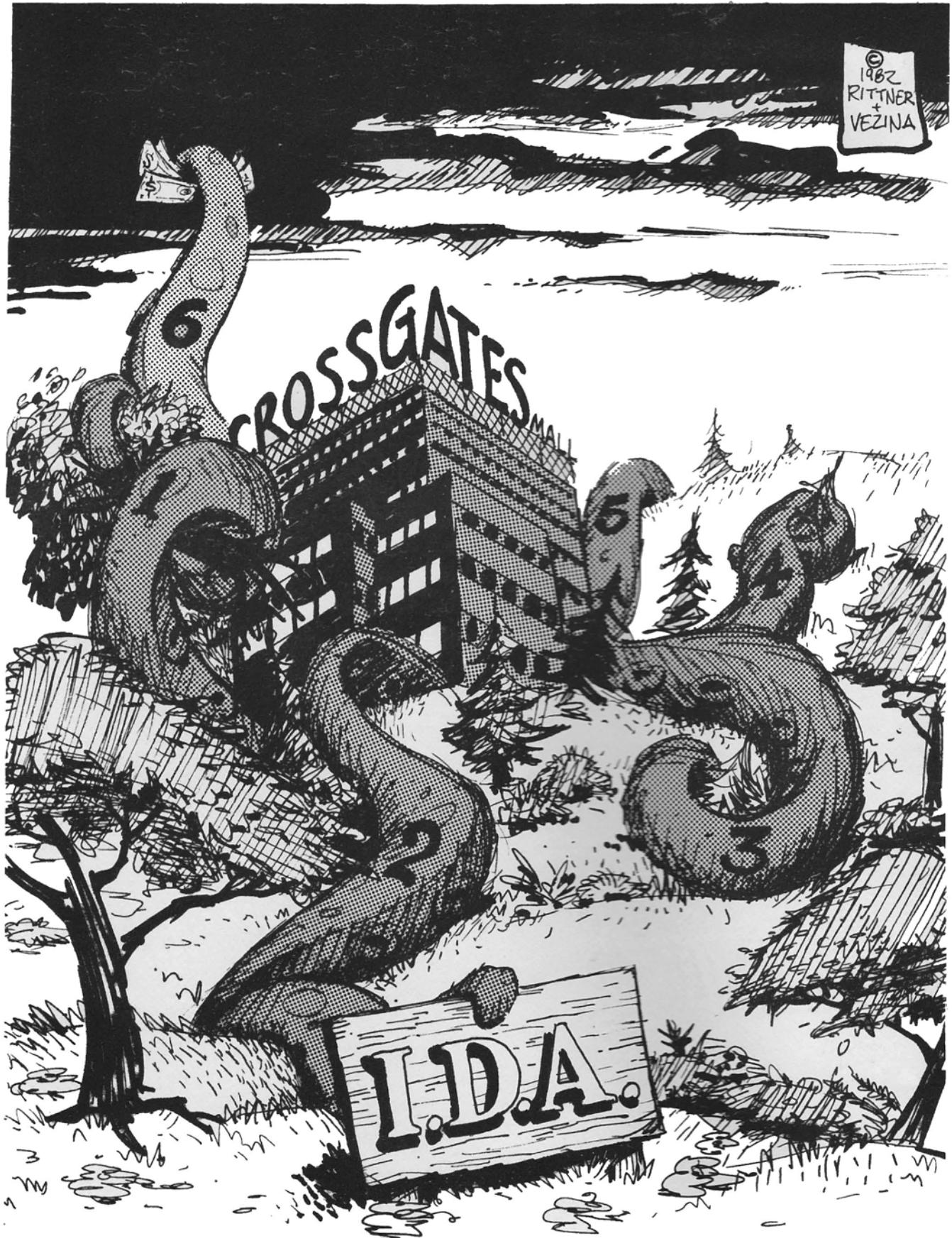
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Bugflicious

SHOPPING MALL



"My dad says they used to grow OUTDOORS."





"But Mr. President, I thought we were in this together?"



"I've read about landfills polluting drinking water, but it can't happen here, right?"



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"I quit."

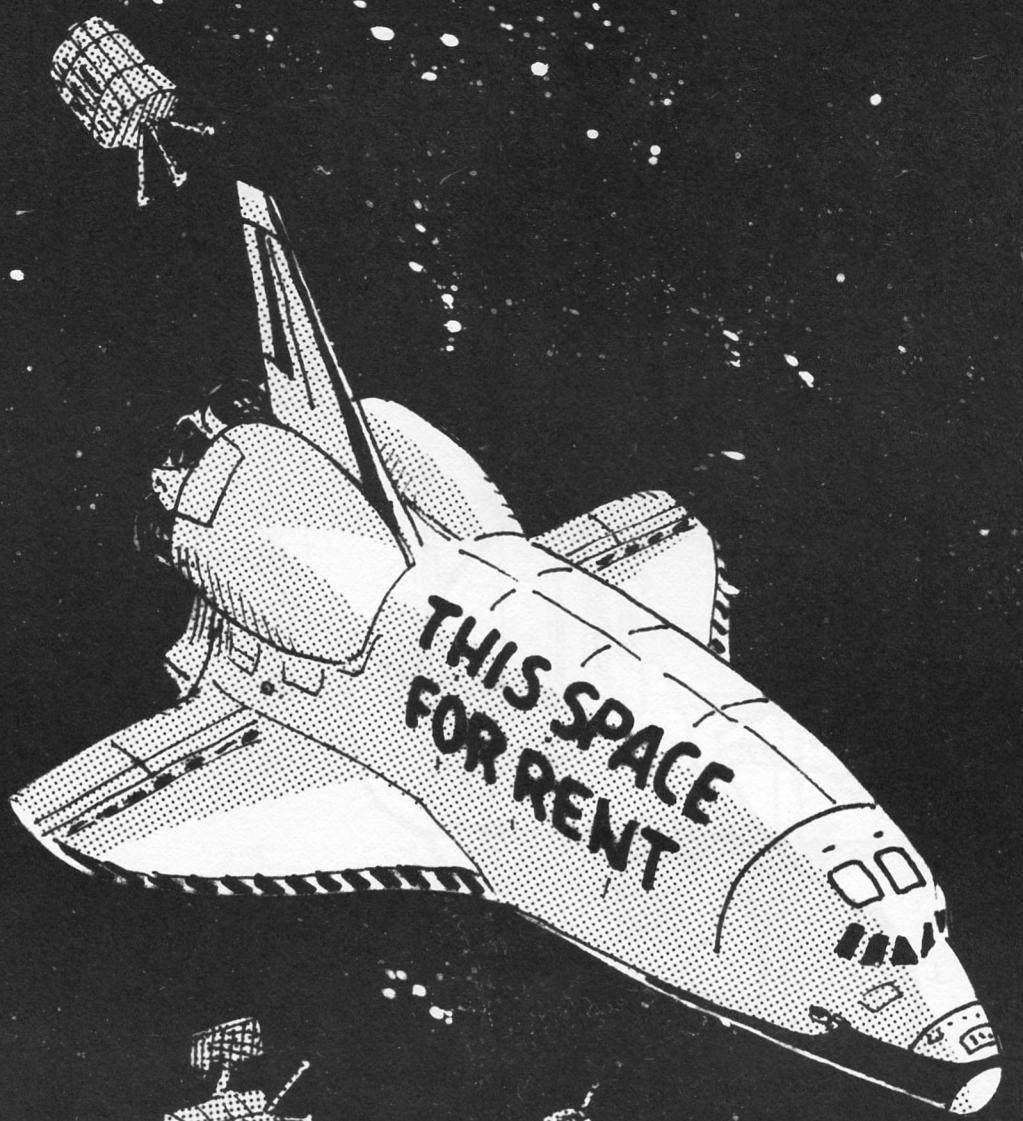
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Produc...



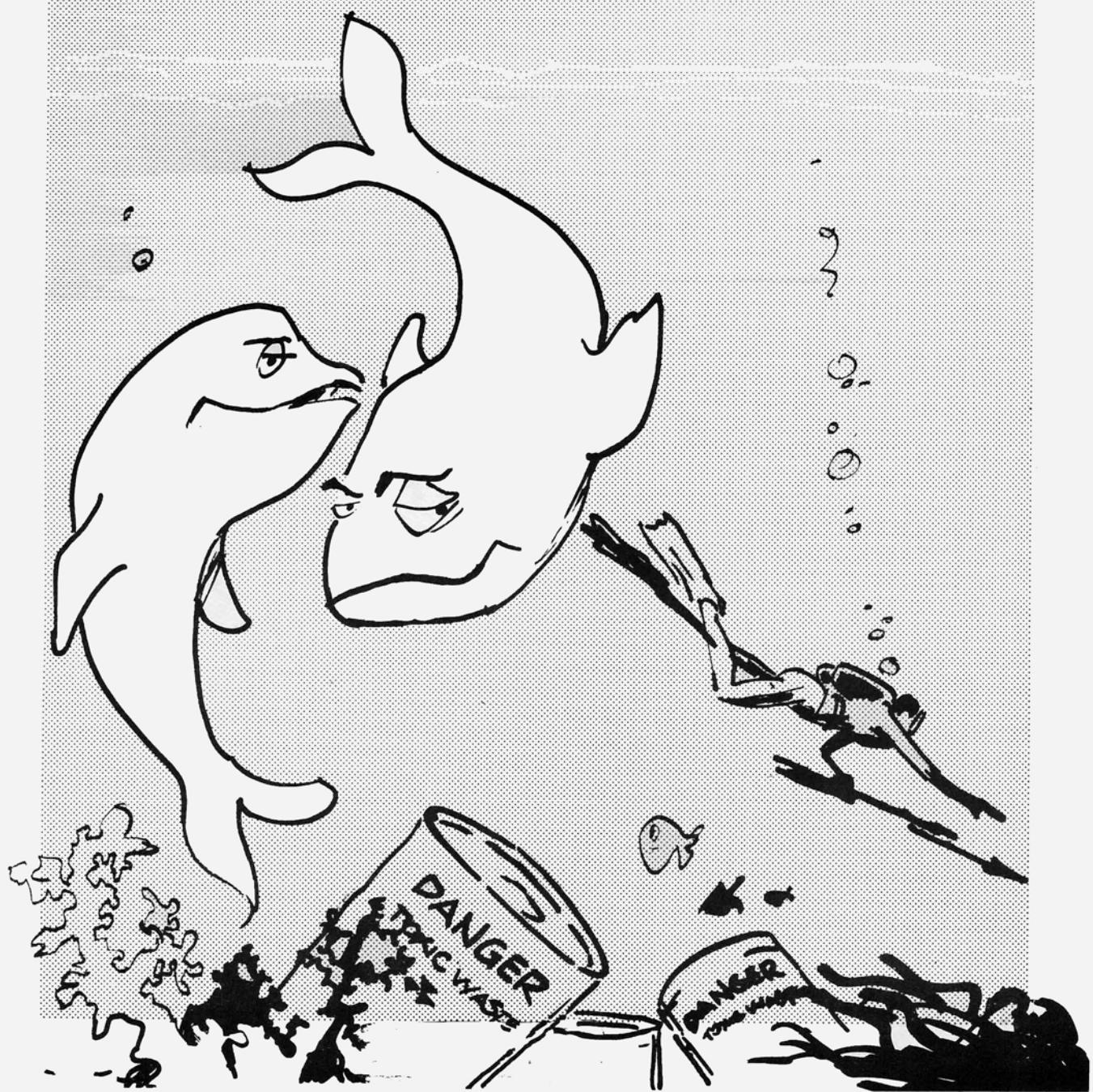


"Let me make it clear that the odds of a major catastrophe here are extremely remote."



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+ VEZINA

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"And they want to study US for intelligence!"





"Of course, we'll leave open space. We will even paint it green for you."



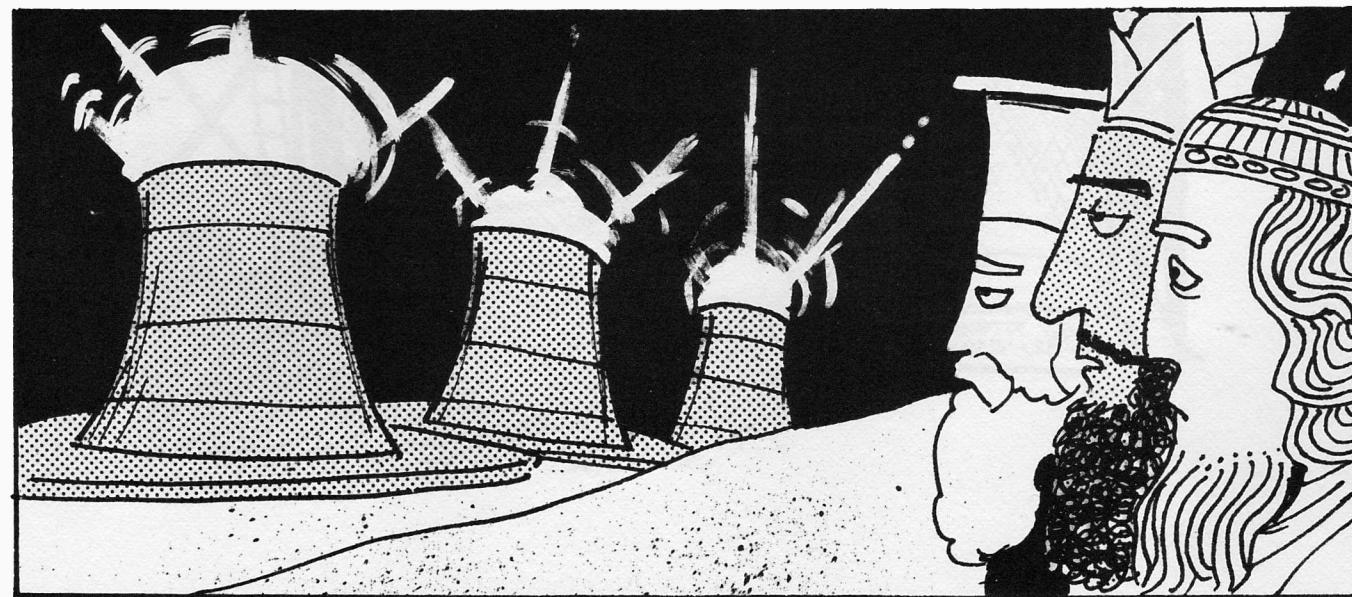
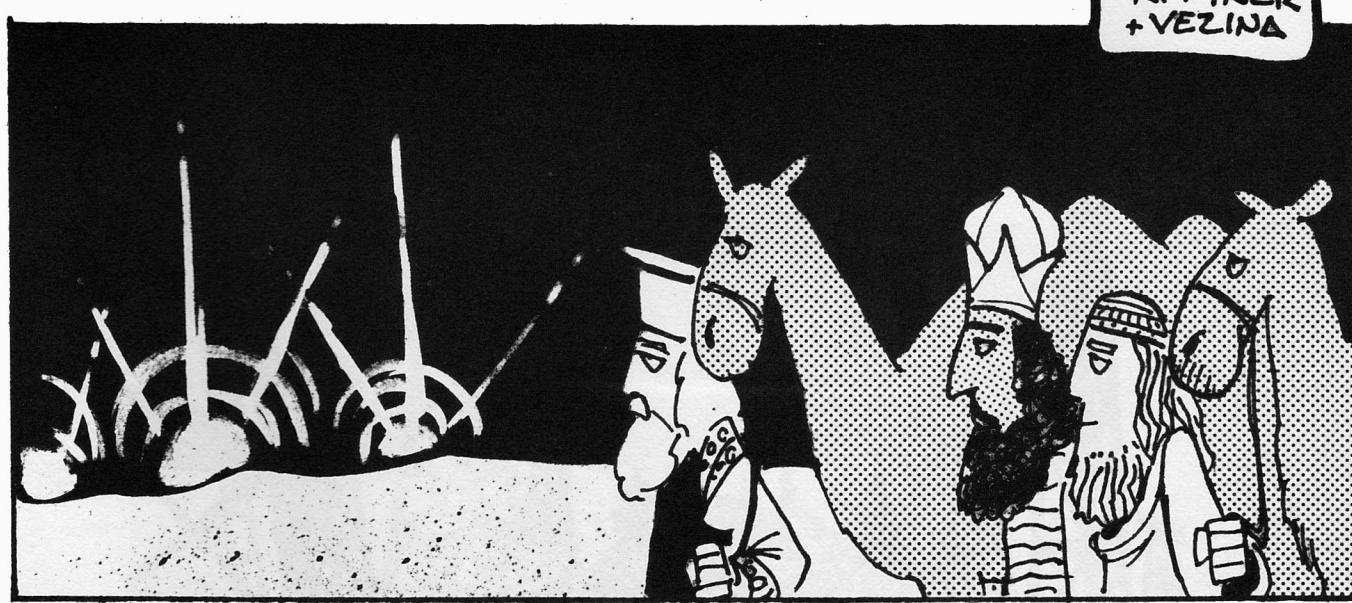
"And this was once a national park, but we improved it – even aligned the trees!"

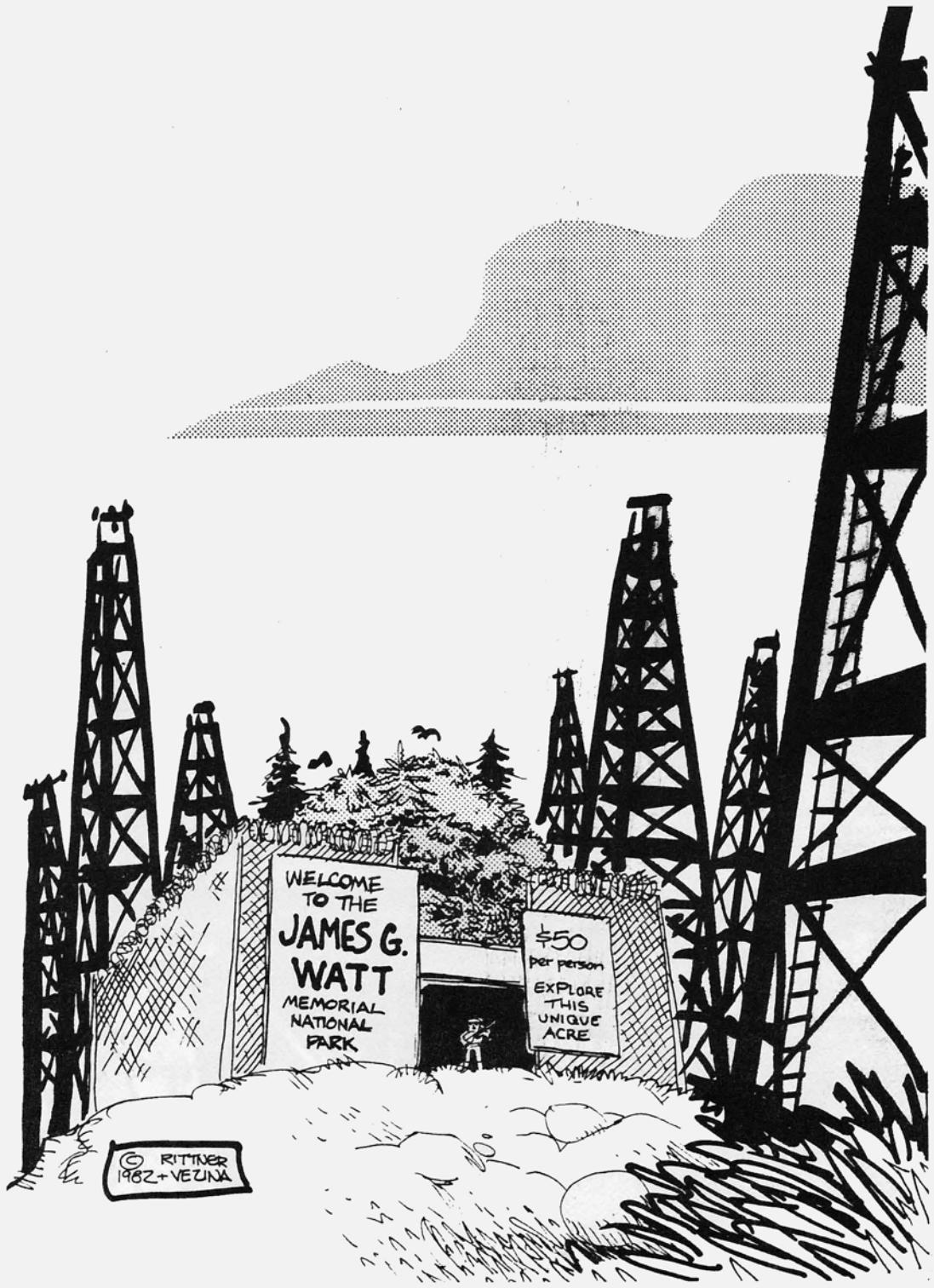


"Here 'tis men, the failure of Socialism."

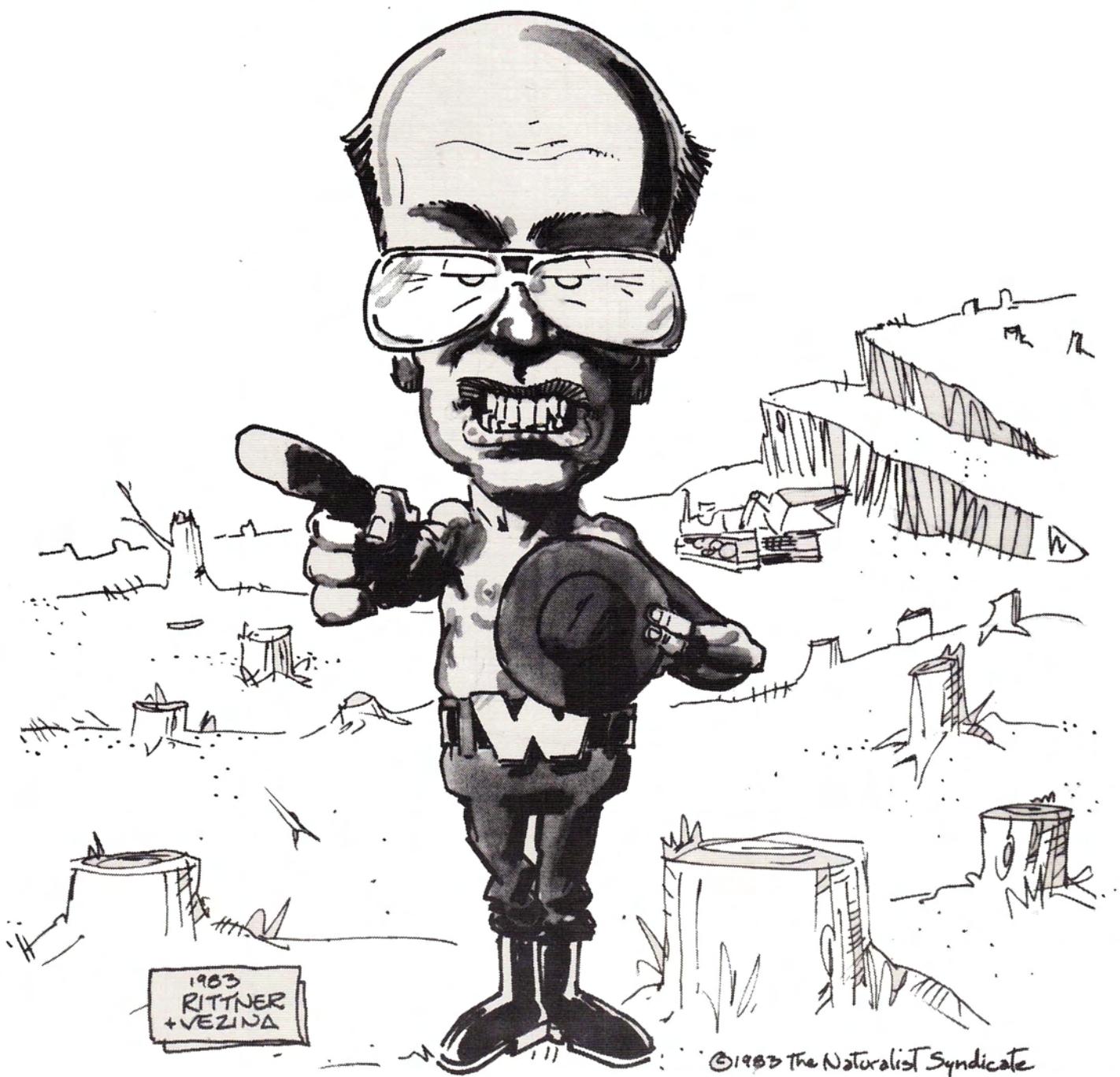


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REMEMBER, ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT FORESTS!



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Additional cartoons that
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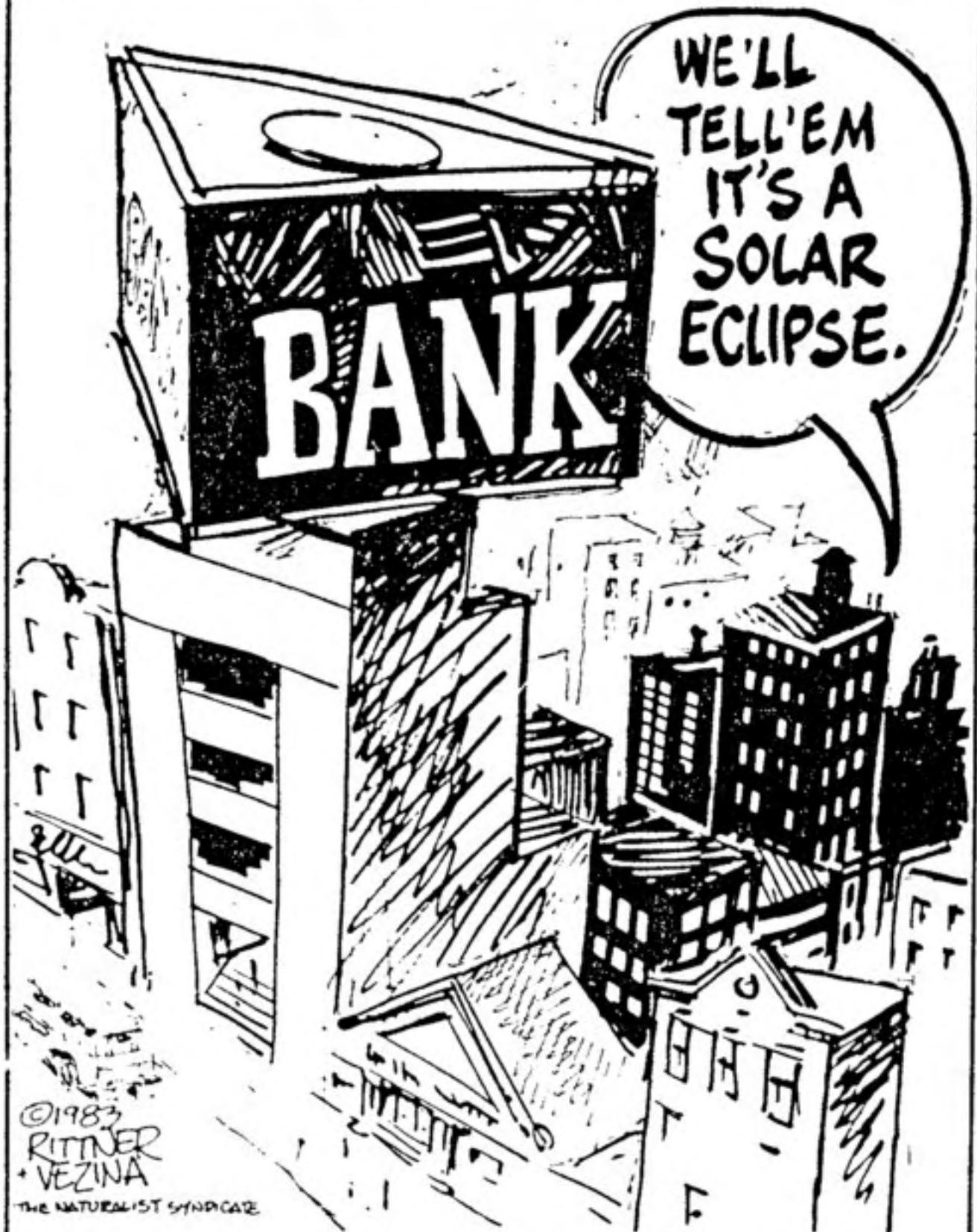
Naturalist at Large



Knickerbocker News/ Rittner & Vezina

"On my honor, I will do my best to ..."

Naturalist at Large



Naturalist at Large



Knickerbocker News/ Rittner & V.

Taxpayers dumped on again.





"Oh yeah! I bet my rash is bigger than your rash!"

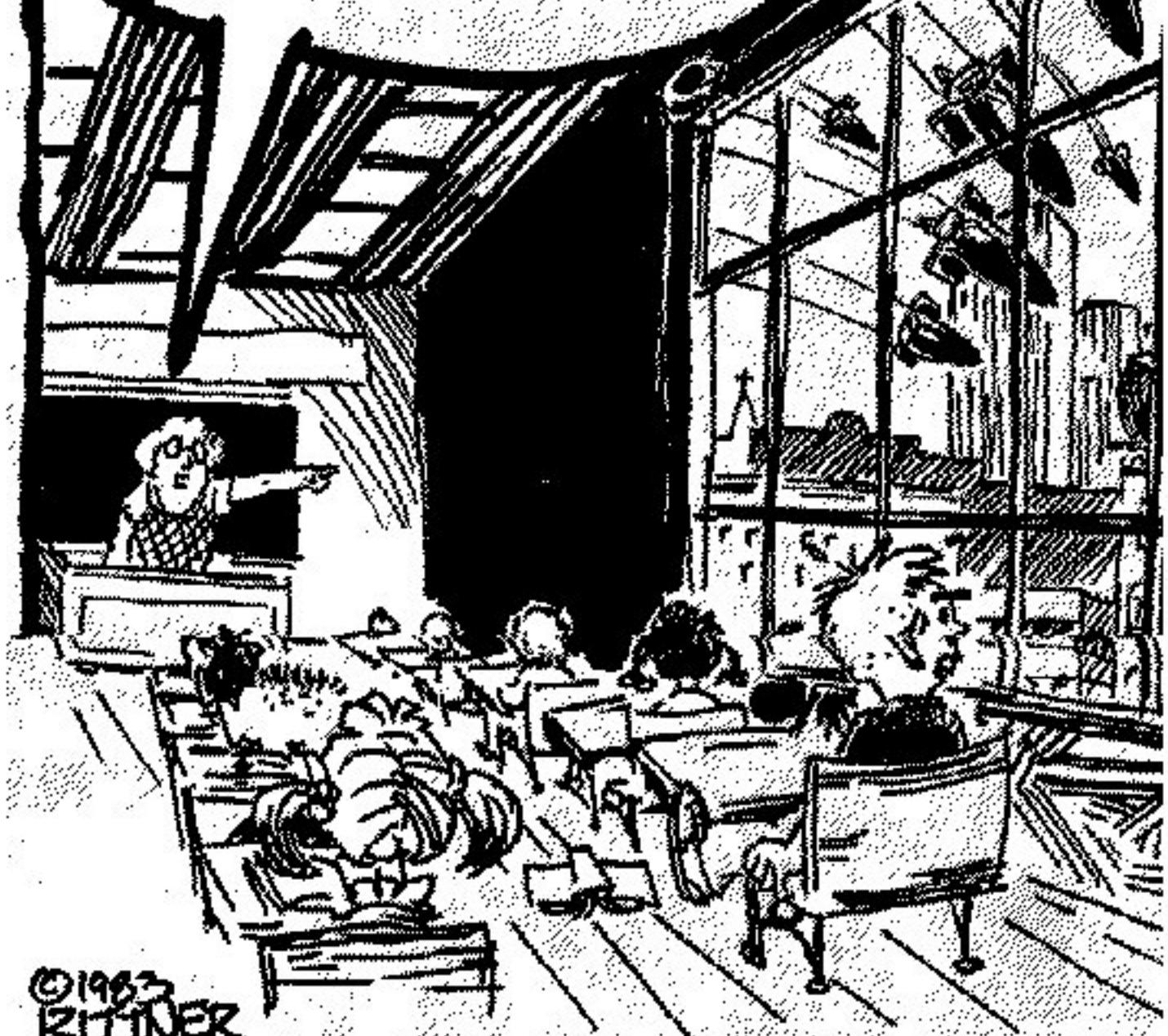
I bet my water is
dirtier than your
water!

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Don Rittner & Raoul Vezina
1726 Lenox Road
Schenectady, NY 12308



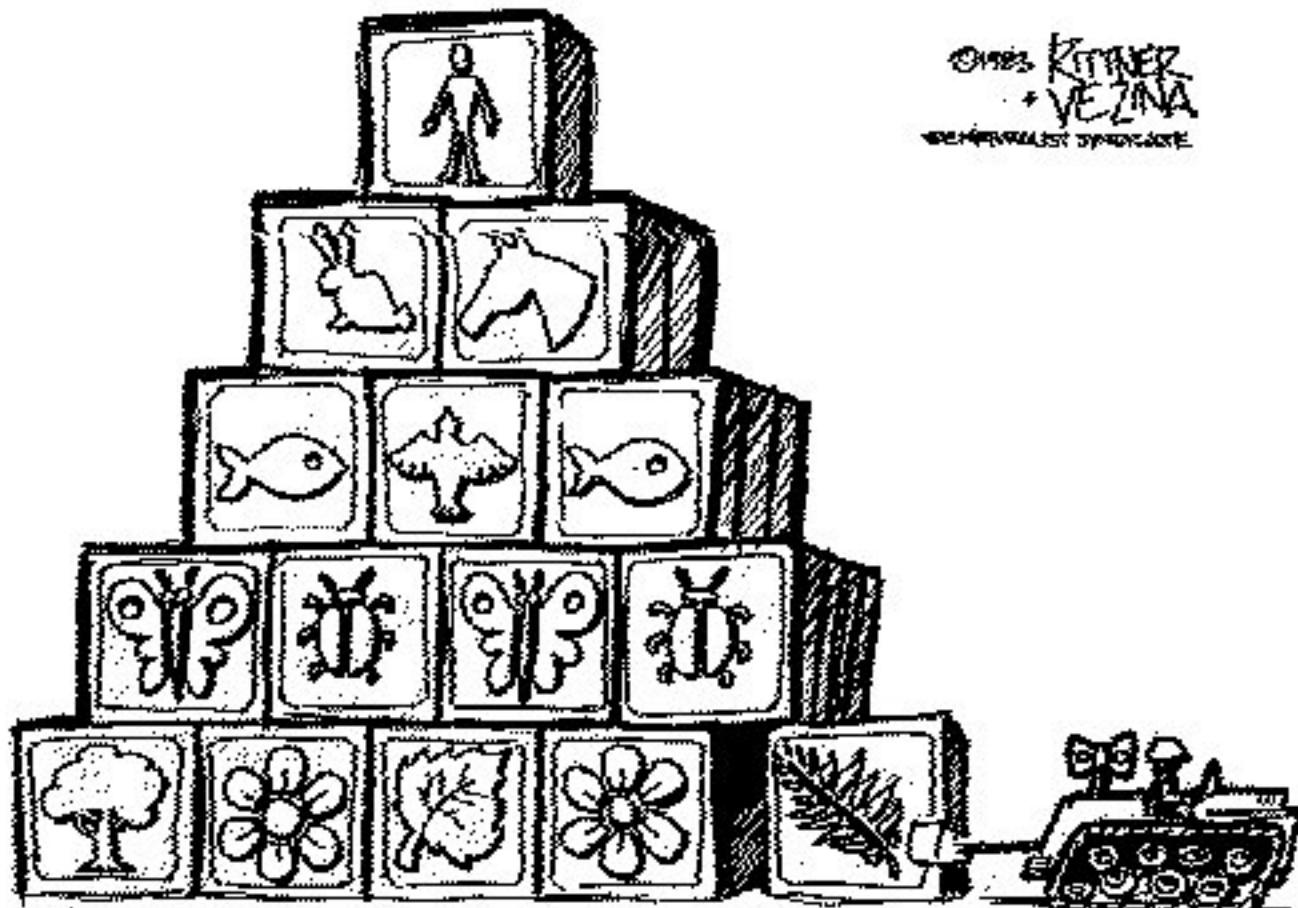
**NOW, JOHNNY,
STOP DAYDREAMING
AND TELL US
WHAT YOU WANT
TO BE WHEN
YOU GROW UP...**



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NATURALIST AT-LARGE



Little kids playing with
the wrong blocks!

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Don Rittner & Raoul Vezina
6A Picturesque Parkway
Schenectady, NY 12303



KIDS!
DON'T
FORGET YOUR
MASKS!



"2010: An average summer day."

I know the sun's out
there somewhere!

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Schenectady, NY 12308

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It's getting higher and deeper!!!

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"DESTRUEVE QUO PINUS DUMETUM"

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"Albany's Pine Bush decisions."

NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT
OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSERVATION

WANTED:
COMMISSIONER
ENVIRONMENTAL
BACKGROUND
A MUST!!

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MAINTAIN



NATURALIST at LARGE

environmental
cartoons

Additional cartoons that
were done by
Don Rittner and
Mark Delfs in 1995

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Naturalist-at-Large



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